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Appropriations Committee
February 17, 2009
Testimony of Martin Mador
Concerning the Proposed Budget for Conservation

I am Martin Mador, 130 Highland Ave., Hamden, CT 06518. I am the Legislative and Political Chair of the Connecticut Sierra Club, and am here today representing our 10,000 Connecticut members concerned about the health of our environment, our economic prosperity, and our quality of life. I possess a Master's of Environmental Management degree from Yale.

I wish to comment on four elements of the proposed budget: the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), the DEP, the Energy Funds, and the Community Investment Act (CIA).

The CEQ was created in 1971 simultaneously with the DEP. It was established to keep an eye on this new agency, and to provide an independent voice monitoring our environmental world. It has done so admirably. It investigates both citizen complaints and issues raised on its own initiative, and prepares both annual and special reports. The CEQ has served as an effective watchdog for almost 40 years.

The governor's budget contains not only fiscal blueprints, but policy changes. It calls for the elimination of almost all watchdog agencies in state government, CEQ among them. It is impossible to discern the Governor's intent, but the effect would be to dismantle the watchdog offices which have served us so well. CEQ cannot possibly maintain its effectiveness if housed within the agency it monitors. To move CEQ within DEP, and to strip it of staff, is to render it blind and without voice. The legislature must not allow this to happen.

As you have heard before, our DEP is one of the lowest funded environmental agencies in the country. As a percentage of the total state budget, DEP funding ranks close to the bottom of the 50 states. The agency is funded at the level it was 20 years ago, but its mission has expanded dramatically. It must administer many new programs with resources that have not grown with its mandates. This may not be the year that DEP funding is increased, but it must NOT be the year in which funding is diminished. Please at least preserve the meager funding for this most important of state agencies.

The CT Clean Energy Fund and CT Energy Efficiency Fund receive their funding from ratepayers. These funds were established to generate funds to pay for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. These projects have been wildly successful, and have proven

themselves economically beneficial. They generate far more in savings than they cost. They are a superb example of investments which pay off handsomely. They have become so successful that 100% of money raised is now allocated to projects.

To take the money from the funds would be economically destructive. To securitize the funds, thus guaranteeing that they would not be available for decades, would be incomprehensible and unacceptable.

The CIA provides funding which is critically important for the continuation of agriculture in Connecticut. It provides staff for the Farmland Preservation Program, funding for necessary surveys and appraisals, and funds for marketing of agricultural products within the state. The agriculture community maintains this critically important natural resource; it must not be allowed to wither. Sierra considers support for agriculture a top priority for the state.
